Design for Social Innovation

Designing a better experience for later life

Tatevik Sargsyan

October 2020

About Design Council

Design Council is the UK Government's advisor on design and over the last 75 years has provided impartial strategic advice and practical support to local and national Government and their agencies to embed design and citizen engagement in their work.

Our **strategy focuses on using design to reduce inequalities**, through programmes on health & wellbeing, sustainable living and increasing design skills among non-designers.


We are the only UK based organisation that **combines design for social & business innovation, public services and architecture & the built environment**, and that has a role in doing design, researching it and making the case to Government to scale it and influence policy.

We have a unique large and diverse network of Design Associates, all experts in design, ready to work with you on challenges.

We are experts in working with people from a non-design background, helping them to use design to drive innovation and tackle systemic issues. Our **Systemic Design framework** can be used to quickly to guide teams through a design process – working across a local system to understand different perspectives, and together set a collective goal, reframe opportunities, identify existing assets and new ideas and trial and test these together.

Our framework for innovation

Design for Health and Wellbeing
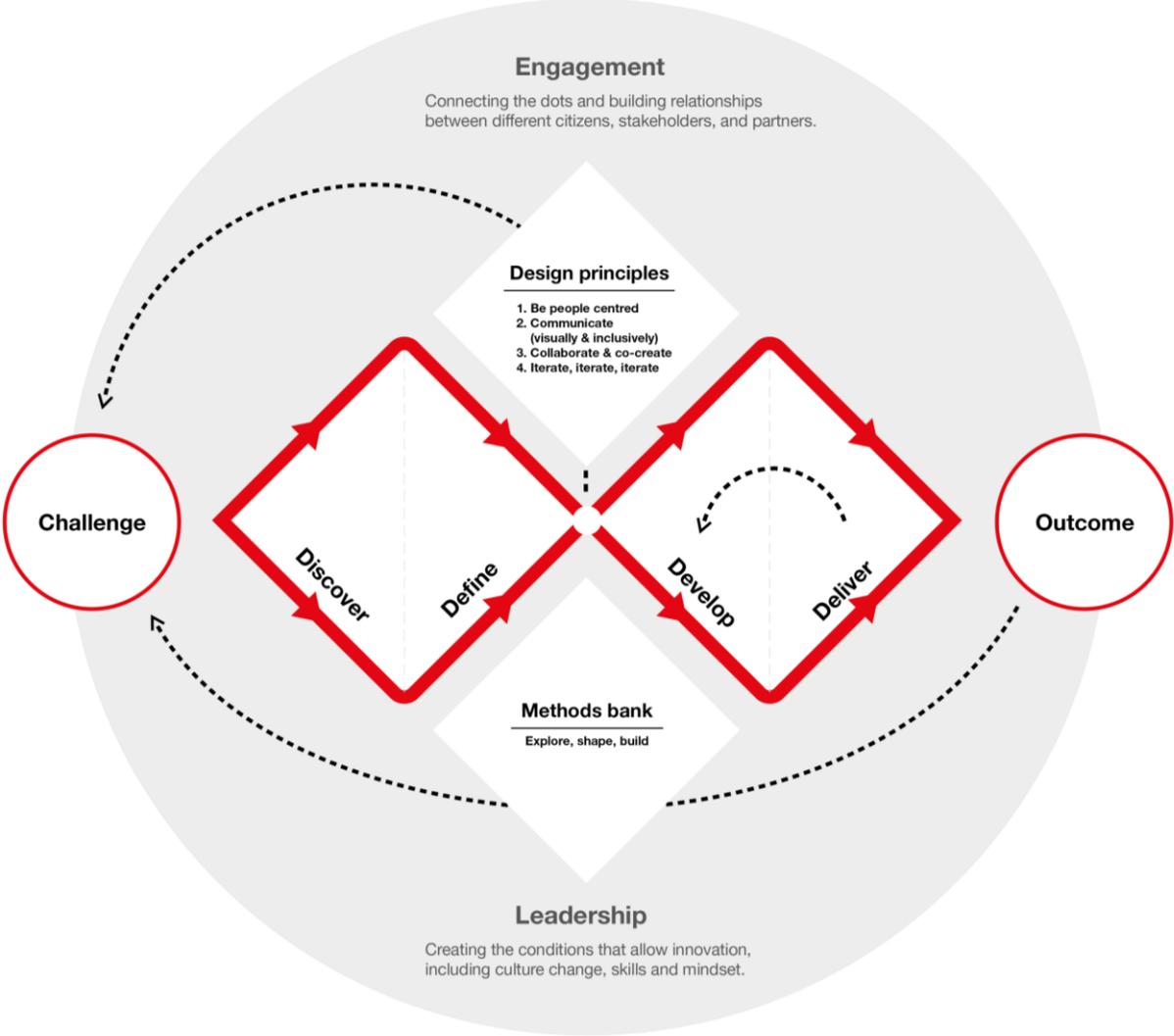
Role of design

The only way to improve health inequalities is by addressing the wider determinants of health, to focus on prevention and how people can maintain healthy lifestyles, and to draw in the resources and energies of businesses and other organisations to support a health and wellbeing goal.

Good **design within business** creates profitable and productive organisations that create jobs (see our Designing Demand evaluation)

Good design **within architecture and the built environment** creates healthy places with important features such as parks and waterscapes, and encourage cycling, walking and clean air (see our Healthy placemaking report)

Good **design within public services** and adopted by **social entrepreneurs** creates user-centred services and initiatives that pass power to the people in communities running them (read our Transform Ageing Final Report).

Design for Care

Enabling better ways to address
our needs as we age

Transform Ageing

Supporting people in later life
through social entrepreneurship,
community and design

Our approach

Social change through combining social **entrepreneurship**, **community** action and world-class **design** practice

Transform Ageing began with a series of **'Exploring the Challenge'** workshops. An opportunity for our social entrepreneurs and public sector leaders to start working alongside people in later life, right from the outset.

Our design techniques and collaborative approach meant the resulting products and services solved real problems. By actively engaging and working with the people who need them, we were able to take a **design-led approach that leads to genuine innovation.**

Impact of the programme

Seeing the value

Local commissioners now see the value of social entrepreneurs as a way to deliver a positive impact on people in later life. They have also seen that those people in later life are assets that can lead this work.

Design for good

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Boost to local economy

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Change in perception

The programme helped social entrepreneurs and commissioners see people in later life as assets, rather than a group that needs providing for. It's an important message that underlines the positive effect the programme had on everyone who took part.

Our learnings from the programme

Not everyone is interested in system-level thinking

Many social entrepreneurs preferred to spend time and resources on what has an immediate impact. Those with models that challenged the system often saw system change as a journey and aspiration for the future.

Design thinking works best as an ongoing process

The innovation briefs were not used by social entrepreneurs in the way we anticipated with social entrepreneurs using the briefs often as a framework rather than prescriptively following.

Synthesising data can affect the local nature of the project

When you synthesise very rich and nuanced data, you do lose some of the local flavour. In the later stages of the programme, this made it even more important to make sure that people in later life who were involved in the workshops could play a meaningful role.

10 recommendations for the future

1. Involve people in later life throughout

2. Take a place-based, whole-system approach

3. Harness the assets within local communities

4. Support systemic design approaches

5. Understand commissioners and connect social entrepreneurs into them

6. But also, develop products and services for a consumer as well as commissioner market

7. Scale ideas without pressure to scale organisations

8. Consider rural counties test beds for innovation

9. Focus more energy on the partnership

10. Be flexible and adapt to change